STOUR VALE ACADEMY TRUST

EARLY YEARS POLICY

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1.0 Introduction and overarching principles

This policy explains how Holywell Nursery and Primary School delivers the EYFS statutory requirements for children from 3 until the 31 August after their fifth birthday, and how our EYFS provision reflects our vision and values: every child is valued for who they are and what they contribute.

Overarching principles:

- Every child is unique and deserves a secure, safe and happy childhood.
- Children learn through positive relationships and enabling environments.
- Practitioners should be ambitious for all children and plan a challenging, enjoyable curriculum that builds strong foundations in prime areas.
- Partnership with parents/carers and equality of opportunity are essential.

This policy applies to all staff working in nursery, reception and any school-based early years provision at Holywell Nursery and Primary School.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Stour Vale Safeguarding Policy
- Stour Vale Concerns/Allegations against Adults Policy
- Stour Vale Whistleblowing Policy
- Stour Vale Performance Development Policy
- Stour Vale First Aid Policy
- Stour Vale Allergy Safety Policy
- Stour Vale Supporting Children and Young People with Medical Conditions and Allergy Policy
- Stour Vale Food Policy
- Stour Vale Health and Safety Policy
- Holywell Business Continuity Policy
- Stour Vale Code of Conduct
- Stour Vale Educational Visits Policy
- Stour Vale Data Protection Policy
- Stour Vale Data Retention Policy
- Stour Vale Nursery Admissions Policy
- Stour Vale Admissions Arrangements
- Stour Vale Complaints Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Arrival, Departure and Late Collection Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Equality Information and Objectives Statement
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Lockdown procedure
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Attendance Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Staff Induction Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Behaviour Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Special Educational Needs Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Fire Safety procedure
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Intimate Care Policy
- Holywell Nursery and Primary School Visitor Policy

2.0 Learning and Development

The intent of our curriculum is to ensure children develop strong communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development so they are ready to access Key Stage 1.

The curriculum is sequenced and ambitious, designed using Development Matters to identify age-appropriate steps and end expectations. It reflects our core values We believe in the education of the 'whole child'. The work we do should not only prepare children for the next step in their education but also to take an active role in their community and world. Learning takes place at all times of the day and in all aspects of what we do. Our daily routine is planned to ensure that children have the opportunity to develop as well-rounded individualsand our context.

Our approaches to teaching and learning in EYFS

- Balance of adult-led focused teaching and high-quality continuous provision where children lead play.
- Practitioners use modelling, scaffolded talk, retrieval where appropriate, and adapt to different rates of development.
- Play is essential; as children progress through reception there is a greater focus on teaching essential skills (phonics, early maths, sentence-building).
- Children will be provided with rich first-hand experiences, stories, visits, visitors and opportunities that broaden vocabulary and understanding of the world.

Prime and specific areas

- We prioritise the following Prime areas of learning, especially in nursery and early reception:
    - Communication & language;
    - Physical development;
    - Personal, social & emotional development

- We teach the following Specific areas of learning through focused activities and embed them in continuous provision:
    - Literacy;
    - Mathematics;
    - Understanding the world;
    - Expressive arts & design

Characteristics of Effective Learning

- The EYFS framework expects attention to:
    - Playing and Exploring
    - Active Learning
    - Creating and Thinking Critically
- Practitioners will observe, model and promote the characteristics of effective learning within the EYFS, for example by sustaining concentration; promoting problem solving; independence, resilience and curiosity.

EYFS curriculum detail for our context

There is also a focus on the following in our setting:

- Oracy: oracy embedded across provision.
- SEND: curriculum adaptations.
- EAL: strategies to support home languages and accelerate English language.

Environment and resources

Indoor and outdoor environments are planned, attractive, culturally and linguistically inclusive, and accessible to support independence. Outdoor continuous provision is integral to the curriculum.

Indoor space requirements

- The setting will organise indoor premises and equipment to meet children's needs and to comply with EYFS indoor space standards. Usable indoor space is calculated from areas that are available to children for activities and does not include storage, corridors, staff rooms, cloakrooms, kitchens, toilets or other non-usable areas.
- Minimum usable indoor space (per child)
    - Children under two years: 3.5 m^2 per child.
    - Two-year-olds: 2.5 m^2 per child.
    - Children aged three to five years: 2.3 m^2 per child.
- The setting will use the usable floor area of each EYFS room to confirm capacity and staffing ratios; these calculations will be recorded and reviewed annually or when room layouts change.
- The setting will not increase the number of children on roll for a room on the basis that additional outdoor space is available; indoor capacity must meet the required standard.

Key-person approach

Each child has a named key person responsible for attachment, welfare and as main contact for parents/carers.

Transitions

Planned phased entry, induction visits, home visits and pre-visits; bespoke transition, e.g. for children with EHCPs, high vulnerability or with limited English. Transition to Year 1 is coordinated with KS1 staff; Year 1 will reflect EYFS practice during the first half term where necessary to secure continuity.

Parental partnership

Families are partners in learning: parents/carers contribute to learning journals, attend workshops (phonics, reading), and receive weekly newsletters to ensure school readiness.

3.0 Assessment

Statutory baseline and ongoing assessment

Baseline

- On entry the Statutory Baseline is completed within first 6 weeks to establish starting points.
- As a school we also complete our own on entry baseline assessment using teacher assessment, ongoing observations and Wellcomm.

- Ongoing formative assessment are also conducted: high-quality observations, learning journeys, and evidence in the environment inform planning and next steps.

Reception profile / end of EYFS

Statutory end-of-EYFS assessment completed in English in reception; reasonable adjustments recorded for EAL/SEND where appropriate.

Use of assessment information

Progress tracked termly against age-related expectations and school progression steps; SLT uses data to identify gaps and target support (e.g., vulnerable groups, children with SEND, EAL learners).

Moderation

Regular internal and external moderation with Stour Vale schools and settings, local cluster and LA to ensure assessment accuracy.

Reporting to parents/carers

Termly parents' evenings, written annual report and opportunities for parents/carers to contribute observations from home.

4.0 Safeguarding and welfare requirements

Safeguarding culture

Safeguarding is effective and non-negotiable. All staff receive statutory safeguarding training and regular updates. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) liaises with local statutory children's services and Local Safeguarding Partners.

Recruitment and suitability

There is robust recruitment in place, DBS checks, induction and ongoing supervision. Visitors are checked and supervised appropriately.

Staff:child ratios and workforce

Statutory staff:child ratios are maintained for each age group. Staff hold appropriate EYFS qualifications and paediatric first aiders are on site at all times during childcare sessions.

Health, safety and welfare

We ensure that the following is in place in our setting: ongoing risk assessments in place; secure arrival and collection procedures; procedures for infection control, administering medication and record keeping; safe sleep arrangements where relevant; food hygiene and allergy procedures.

Safe sleeping arrangements

- Sleeping children will be checked frequently to ensure their safety at all times.

- Cots, mattresses and bedding must be appropriate for the child's age, clean and in good condition, and used in accordance with safe sleep guidance.
- Babies will be placed to sleep following current government/NHS advice on reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and related NHS guidance, and practitioners responsible for sleeping children will be familiar with and follow that guidance.
- Any checks, incidents or changes to sleeping arrangements will be recorded on the child's record and parents/carers informed in line with our record-keeping and safeguarding procedures.

Safe Eating arrangements

Please read this section alongside the Stour Vale Food Policy. Holywell Nursery and Primary School will ensure that children eat safely, have dietary needs met, and are protected from choking, allergic reaction and foodborne illness. We will:

- Obtain written dietary/medical information from parents/carers before admission.
- Share and file this information in the child's record and with all staff who prepare or supervise food.
- Request parents/carers confirm details annually and immediately if circumstances change.
- Produce an individual care plan for any child at risk, co-produced with parents/carers and, where needed, health professionals.
- Ensure named staff receive training on the plan, recognition of allergic reactions/anaphylaxis and use of emergency devices.
- Ensure at least one paediatric-first-aid trained member of staff is present in the room or designated eating area whenever children are eating or drinking.
- Children must remain within sight and hearing of staff while eating; staff should face children where possible to observe faces/mouths and prevent food sharing.
- Seat babies and young children in suitable highchairs or appropriately sized low chairs.
- Use a designated, low distraction eating space where possible.
- Prepare and present food to prevent choking (soften, remove skins/pips, cut into suitable sizes).
- Staff who handle/prepare food must be competent and trained in food hygiene; hygienic facilities and sterilisation equipment for baby food must be available when required.
- Teach and model safe eating behaviours in routines (sit to eat, small bites, no running with food).
- Record any choking incidents, allergic reactions or eating related medical interventions, noting where/how the incident occurred and actions taken.
- Inform parents/carers the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Review incident records termly to identify trends and take corrective action.
- Notify Ofsted of food poisoning affecting two or more children within statutory timeframes.

Promoting good health and supporting behaviour

Staff promote healthy lifestyles, manage behaviour developmentally with restorative approaches, and teach emotional regulation and social skills aligned with school values.

Records, policies and notifications

Providers must hold required documentation (provider contact details; daily attendance record; key person list; certificate of registration). Changes that must be notified to Ofsted are reported

promptly (see statutory requirements). Records are accurate, stored securely and shared on a need-to-know basis in line with data protection and safeguarding duties.

Other legal duties

EYFS statutory requirements sit alongside other legal obligations (employment law, health & safety, anti-discrimination legislation, data collection regulations, duty of care).

Inspections and quality assurance

Providers must notify parents/carers if they are to be inspected by Ofsted and a copy of any published report will be supplied to parents/carers of children who attend regularly.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- Headteacher: Victoria Tuck— ensure statutory compliance, resource allocation and staff training; overall accountability for EYFS.
- EYFS Lead / Phase Leader: Naomi Watkins— day-to-day leadership of curriculum, assessment, staff development and QA.
- Class teachers and practitioners: plan, teach, assess, maintain key-person relationships and communicate with parents.
- SENDCo and Inclusion Lead: Rachel Soudani— coordinate SEND graduated response, EHCP processes and liaise with external agencies.
- DSL: James Harold — lead safeguarding in EYFS and school-wide.
- Governors: hold leaders to account for EYFS statutory compliance and impact.

Changes that must be notified to Ofsted

- The provider will notify Ofsted of any of the changes or events specified in the EYFS statutory framework that could affect the registration, suitability or operation of the early years provision.
    - These include changes to the premises or address (including any change that affects usable space or quality of provision);
    - any change to the provider's name or contact details;
    - any change of the person managing the EYFS provision;
    - any proposal to introduce overnight care;
    - any significant event likely to affect the suitability of the provider or of any person who cares for, or is regularly in unsupervised contact with, children; and, where relevant, changes to company, charity or partnership details (for example company name/registration number, nominated individual, partners, directors or other officers).

- Where a notification concerns a change of person (other than a manager), the provider will supply the new person's name, any former names/aliases, date of birth and home address. Where it is reasonably practicable, changes (particularly a change of manager) should be notified in advance; otherwise notification will be made as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event, within 14 days.
- Failure without reasonable excuse to make required notifications is an offence under the EYFS requirements.

6.0 Inclusion, SEND and EAL

- The graduated approach for SEND is used in EYFS: assess — plan — do — review; early identification through observations and assessment; SEND plans reviewed regularly; SEND Hub provision timetabled and monitored for sustainability.
- EAL provision: celebrate home languages; assess communication, language and literacy skills in English while exploring home-language skills with parents; classroom strategies include visual supports, sentence frames and targeted small-group talk.

7.0 Staffing, training and professional development

- declaration of medication, the medical advice received and any adjustments to duties, and will review arrangements with the member of staff and the DSL where safeguarding or safety concerns arise.
- CPD priorities reflect school improvement priorities
- New staff receive induction and support from EYFS lead; coaching, joint planning and learning walks used for consistency and improvement.

Staff taking medication/other substances

- Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that could impair their ability to care for children. If a member of staff is taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication that might affect their performance, they must seek medical advice and inform the Headteacher. Staff may only continue to work directly with children where medical advice confirms the medication is unlikely to impair their ability to supervise and care for children safely. All medication kept on the premises must be stored securely and out of reach of children at all times. The school will only record information about a member of staff's medication or medical condition where it is necessary for health and safety, emergency response, occupational health, or reasonable adjustment purposes.

8.0 Monitoring, evaluation and review

- Monitoring through learning walks, planning scrutiny, data review, learning journals, parent feedback and staff meetings; findings feed the school improvement plan and annual EYFS action plan.
- This policy is reviewed annually by the EYFS lead and Headteacher and approved by governors.

9.0 Complaints

- Parental/carer concerns will be handled according to the school complaints policy.